

Getting down and DIRTY TO CHANGE THEIR LIVES

Two Mpumalanga women share how being in agriculture has changed their lives for the better

By Palesa Matjebele



Through the skills they have learnt from the Timbali Technology Incubator, Nontokoza Ndlovu and Kate Shekwa from Mpumalanga are able to earn money and take care of their families

THE lives of Nontokoza Ndlovu (31) and Kate Shekwa (30) from Mpumalanga were forever changed the day they heard about the Timbali Technology Incubator from a friend. Tired of depending on the government for survival, these unemployed women decided to join the incubator. Nontokoza was given a portion of land, which she farms on, while Kate works at a packaging company. Timbali equipped the women with the necessary skills and provided training in agriculture.

MAKING THE MOST OF IT

For Nontokoza, whose family members are all unemployed, joining the Timbali project was a great opportunity to step up and support her six siblings. The mother of two was given a portion of land, where she produces vegetables such as baby marrows, which she sells to one of South Africa's

biggest retailers. But Nontokoza says farming was new to her and shares that she found it difficult to get used to being in agriculture and struggled a bit in the beginning.

"You need a lot of patience, perseverance and hard work to make it as a farmer. It is not easy, but it can be done. People look down on farmers but I have managed to look past all the criticism and I am now passionate about what I do. I'm happy to say that instead of waiting for social grants and crying about a lack of jobs, I can put food on the table with these dirty hands," she says.

Nontokoza still falls under Timbali and will only receive independence as a farmer when she reaches a certain standard. However, she has complete control of the portion of land she was given.

She says through farming, she is now able to look after her family, with her brother having recently